



Brioni, C. (2020). Shorn capelloni: hair and young masculinities in the Italian media, 1965-1967. *Modern Italy*, 25(1), 3-16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2019.25>

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[10.1017/mit.2019.25](https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2019.25)

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## **Shorn *capelloni*: hair and young masculinities in the Italian media, 1965-1967**

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In the period between 1965 and 1967, a series of acts of violence took place against the Italian *capelloni* (young men with long hair). These attacks frequently ended with an attempted or actual cutting of these young men's hair. This article analyses how these incidents were represented in newspapers, teen magazines, and in the short film *Il Mostro della Domenica* by Steno (Stefano Vanzina, 1968) featuring Totò. Drawing on literature about the shaving of French and Italian collaborationist women in the aftermath of the Second World War (Virgili 2002), it explores the potential gender anxieties caused by young men's long hairstyles, as represented by the media. The attacks on the *capelloni* are interpreted as a punishment for the male appropriation of a traditionally feminine attribute of seduction: the cutting of young men's hair symbolically reaffirmed an ideal of virile masculinity in a moment of 'decline of virilism' (Bellassai 2011) in Italian society.

**Keywords:** *capelloni; male hairstyles; youth; masculinity; beat; Totò*

### **Introduction**

From 1965, long hair for young men became an increasingly popular hairstyle in Italy, and the term *capellone*, literally 'man with long hair' – often inflected in the plural form *capelloni* – began to be used to define those who adopted this trend. In the print media, this term immediately bore a negative connotation: long hair became a sign of identification for those Italian youths who were protesting against the consumerist society of post-economic boom Italy. The phenomenon of the *capelloni* has indeed been analysed in relation to the emergence of an Italian beat movement (De Martino and Grispigni 1997; Guarnaccia 2005; De Martino 2008; Casilio 2006; Giachetti 2002a). These works highlight how in this period long hair became a sign of social and political revolt, and it was an identifier of those groups who anticipated the demands made by the Italian 1968 student movements. However, media coverage illustrates that the wave of public indignation against the *capelloni* did not just concern their social and political belonging. Long hair was criticised for being a sign of dirtiness and effeminacy, and therefore for signalling young people's 'troubling' generational and gender identity. This aspect has been largely overlooked by scholarly research so far, which has taken little consideration of the

reaction to youth-oriented trends that challenged traditional gendered styles in Italian society during the 1960s.

In order to fill this gap, this article reflects on the implications of long hair as a sign of the generational, gender and national reconfiguration of Italian masculinities, through an analysis of written and visual media representations of a series of violent attacks against long-haired young men from 1965 to 1967, which were characterised by an attempted or actual cutting of these men's hair. After presenting a brief historical overview of the phenomenon of the Italian *capelloni*, and explaining why it can be seen as having originated a moral panic in Italian society, the article concentrates on the media coverage and representations of episodes of *capelloni*'s hair-cutting.

Firstly, it explores accounts of these attacks in *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*,<sup>1</sup> two of the most popular newspapers at the time, and in the teen magazine *Big*, which all reported the incidents and reacted with a variety of either conservative or subversive attitudes, according to the target readership. My approach to newspapers has been based on a selection of the most pertinent accounts of attacks from all the articles containing the word '*capelloni*' published between 1965 and 1967. The magazine *Big* has been taken into consideration because it was, together with *Ciao Amici* and *Giovani*, one of the first weekly magazines specifically aimed at an audience of young people in Italy, and it published several letters recounting attacks against *capelloni*. According to Diego Giachetti, the magazine had a large distribution: the average circulation was about 400,000-500,000 copies, with a very low return rate (around 15 per cent) (2002b, 100). The analysis of articles and letters in these print media aims to highlight several potential anxieties connected to the 'decline of "virilism" ("*virilismo*")'<sup>2</sup> (Bellassai 2011) in Italian society and the postwar reconfiguration of Italian masculinities. To do so, it draws on literature about representations of the shaving of collaborationist women in Italy and France in the aftermath of the Second World War, which has also been interpreted as a response to the changing gender and social role of women.

Secondly, this article analyses the representation of haircutting in the short film *Il Mostro della Domenica* (*Sunday's Monster*, Steno, 1968), which is one of the few audiovisual media representations of attacks against the hair of the *capelloni*. This film is an example of how comedy was used in popular culture to criticise the wave of public indignation surrounding the *capelloni*, and to favour the acceptance of long hairstyles for men in Italian society.

### **Italian *Capelloni* and moral panic in Italian newspapers**

From the end of the 1950s, young people started to be increasingly perceived as a separate social and political subject in Italian society (Crainz 2003, 187-216). This development had cultural, social and economic causes, and it was influenced by a global process of definition of a collective 'youth' identity based on age (Mitterauer 1993, 225-238). The social construction of a generational identity for Italian youths benefited from popular media representations: in film, television and magazines youth was performatively constructed through the reiteration of specific jargon and practices (Brioni 2017, 415). One of these practices was the adoption of youth-oriented fashions, which were usually the result of the commercial incorporation of subcultural styles (Hebdige 2002, 94-96). The use of trends and hairstyles that were often borrowed from abroad made the generational difference of Italian youths increasingly visible. As Alessandra Castellani maintains, these trends often questioned the traditional division between male and female appearance (2010, 33).

Amongst all of the trends that characterised Italian young people in this period, long hair for men was certainly one of the most significant in terms of redefining the standards of masculine appearance. According to Victoria Sherrow, the trend of wearing long hairstyles for Western youth was encouraged by the celebrity of the Beatles (2006, 1994). In the mid-1960s, the band from Liverpool gained international success, and their first tour in Italy in June 1965 demonstrated their increasing popularity with Italian youth. Together with the band's 'beat' music, the Beatles' style, and in particular their mop top hairstyle, became extremely influential and imitated all over the world, including in Italy. Several young stars adopted this trend, including the Rokes, an English band who mimicked the Beatles for the Italian audience, Italian beat bands such as Equipe 84, and television personalities like Gene Guglielmi, who played the character of a 'friendly *capellone*' on Mike Bongiorno's quiz *Giochi in Famiglia* (*Family Games*, directed by Antonio Moretti, Secondo Programma, 1966-1967).

The trend of long hair in Italy in the mid-1960s was not inspired only by the English beat music scene – it also drew on the style of the American beatnik movement. The term '*capelloni*' was indeed used to define the first groups of Italian beats, which developed in Milan and Rome from 1965 to 1967 (De Angelis 1998, 75). The beats were youth movements that endorsed rebellion against the consumerist society created by the economic boom through the promotion of sexual freedom and pacifism, and criticism of the authority of the family, educational institutions, and the Church. In Milan, the beats self-published an underground magazine, *Mondo Beat*,<sup>3</sup> and in 1967 they set up a commune, defined by journalists as '*Barbonia*' (Trampland), which was dismantled by the police soon after its establishment. Unlike the Milanese beats, the movement in Rome was less organised, and from 1965 would meet in public spaces such as

Piazza di Spagna, where Italian and foreign beats used to organise sit-ins which were repeatedly broken up by the police.

These movements and their demonstrations contributed to the advent of a wave of moral panic against the *capelloni*. In his influential 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Stanley Cohen notes that the emergence of youth as a separate subject in postwar societies has often been accompanied by forms of social preoccupation. By analysing the social reaction against Mods and Rockers in the United Kingdom, he defines some key elements of this process. Firstly, moral panic occurs when ‘a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests’ (Cohen 2002, 1). From 1965 onwards, a ‘*capellone*-hunt’ (*Corriere della Sera* 1966g, 2) was mounted by the police forces. Most newspaper articles about the *capelloni* recounted episodes of young people being arrested, rounded up or repatriated (if they were foreigners) for drug dealing, kidnapping and begging. Anxieties about the *capelloni* did not just concern actual crimes: several articles show a clear obsession with long hair *per se*, and indicate a rejection of these young men in Italian society based solely on their outward appearance. The trend of wearing long hair was considered indecent and immoral, and it inspired a desire to ‘cleanse’ Italian society of these young people. Indeed one of the most frequent accusations levied at the *capelloni* was their being dirty. Alessandra Castellani points out that:

to be a *capellone* ... meant to endorse a series of strong values and counter-values towards the dominant culture .... Ungroomed, messy hair conveys the idea of something *out of place*, and it symbolically evokes dirt, even when it is clean ....

Ungroomed hair recalls a savage condition. (Castellani 2010, 60)

The dirtiness evoked by long hair was seen as a sign of young people’s refusal to accept social rules, and therefore of a desire to oppose the values of civil society. According to Sandro Mayer, the metaphorical weapons which were commonly said to solve the ‘problem’ of *capelloni* were either scissors or insecticide: in other words, to be reintegrated in civil society, *capelloni* had either to be shaved or disinfested (1968, 14).

Secondly, Cohen explains how the threat of a moral panic is ‘presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media’ (2002, 1). In the case of Italy, print media certainly contributed to the demonisation of the *capelloni*: from 1965 to 1967, the term ‘*capellone*’ occurs approximately 2500 times in *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*. *Corriere della Sera* in particular published articles critiquing long-haired young people (Crainz 2003, 192-199). *La Stampa* seemed to maintain a more cautious position on the *capelloni*, giving space to contributions by intellectuals such as writer Elsa Morante, which denounced these acts as excessive persecutions and defended the *capelloni* (1965, 3). Morante’s intervention supports

Cohen's identification of the emergence of a public outcry when 'socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions' (2002, 1).<sup>4</sup> Unlike Morante, Pier Paolo Pasolini declared he was 'suspicious' of the *capelloni*. He expressed his opinion in a famous article that appeared in the *Corriere della Sera* in 1973 entitled 'Against long hairstyles'. According to Pasolini, in the 1960s long hair became a sign that could speak for its (young) bearer, but the message that this sign conveyed had changed over time. He claims to have cautiously endorsed the *capelloni* in the period 1965-1967, because the 'discourse' they were expressing was that of the new Left that then developed in the student protests of 1968. However, less than a decade later, long hair had evolved to express 'right-wing' views, in that it had become a trend, and a bourgeois element of homogenisation for Italian youths (Pasolini 1973, 2). It is essential to note that, as Guido Crainz maintains, 'the [print media] campaign against the *capelloni* seems excessive if compared to the actual extent of this phenomenon' (2008, 196). In other words, it seems that the preoccupation about a change of values in Italian society was disproportionate to the actual presence of long-haired young men. This concern was perhaps a consequence of the increasing visibility of the *capelloni* in the media in this time frame, given their participation in political demonstrations and their essential contribution to rescuing and preserving artistic heritage after the 1966 Florence flood (Crainz 2003, 196-197).

The moral panic against the *capelloni* can be analysed in relation to the emergence of youth as a rebellious subject in Italian society. Long hair was seen as a sign of recalcitrance against the adult generation and its values, which triggered a desire to better control the younger generations and reaffirm the dynamics of power in the family. This desire to re-establish authority over youths is evident in newspaper accounts of incidents where the *capelloni*'s hair was cut by their fathers. For example, several articles in the *Corriere della Sera* tell stories of *capelloni* who were obliged to cut their hair after running away from home (1966h, 8), or as a disciplinary action for disobeying paternal authority. By cutting their sons' hair, and thus reproducing the traditional power structure in which young people were subjected to adult authority, Italian fathers were symbolically restoring the dynamics of power between generations.

Situations where the *capelloni* were obliged to cut their hair or subjected to haircuts show how concerns with these young men were not simply about criminality, and emphasize the challenges that their appearance presented to the norms of authority, morality and masculinity. The simple fact of wearing a long hairstyle was presented as equally relevant – and distressing – as committing an actual crime: it is interesting to note that news concerning the *capelloni* as delinquents and the *capelloni* as victims of forced haircutting were often combined in newspapers. For example, an article published in *Corriere della Sera* in 1966 connects the story

of a group of *capelloni* who were rounded-up and arrested for ‘acts against morality’ to a piece of news about a young man in Novara who was obliged by his father to get a haircut in order to avoid suspension from school (1966b, 1). An article appeared in *Corriere della Sera* in 1967 shows how haircutting was also used as an alternative punishment for delinquent acts like verbal or physical harassment. It tells the story of a young Sicilian *capellone* who hit a woman with a club in Milan. The victim’s husband asks the young man whether he wants to be punished with a complaint of injury or with a haircut. The article describes the moment the victim’s husband gives the first cut to the young *capellone*’s hair (*Corriere della Sera* 1967, 4). The conflation of the image of the delinquent *capellone* and that of the unruly *capellone* emerging from these stories suggests that these two behaviours were equally considered as crimes, and that they both deserved a punishment; in other words, for Italian youths having a long hairstyle was a problem in itself, which went beyond what the bearer of the hairstyle actually did.

### **Shorn *capelloni***

Forms of punishment directed at the *capelloni* for their long hairstyles did not just take place in the family context. Newspapers and teen magazines offer accounts of acts of violence against individuals or groups of *capelloni* perpetrated by undefined groups of people for no apparent reason. These attacks took place mostly in public spaces, and in big cities of northern and central Italy, where this trend was arguably more widespread. Attacks could involve fights, or the throwing of objects at the *capelloni*, and would end with an attempted or actual cutting of the *capelloni*’s hair. For example, in January 1966, *Corriere della Sera* reports an attack against a group of *capelloni* outside the Caffè Pedrocchi in Padua. The article narrates how the *capelloni* were harassed by a group of people on the street, and a fight started between the two groups. The clash was then ended by the police intervention (1966a, 10). An editorial of the teen magazine *Big* two months later also reports this attack, adding specific details:

Walking past the Caffè Pedrocchi, [the *capelloni*] were verbally harassed by a group of so-called conformists. ... When these “street hooligans” ran out of vocabulary, they surrounded the *capelloni* and started to rough them up, and even set alight some newspapers in order to create torches that could burn the *capelloni*’s hair. Thanks to the intervention of the police, nothing happened, but this incident is something to reflect upon. (*Big* 1966a, 3)

In this case, the magazine clearly sides with the *capelloni* and denounces this episode. In May 1966, the newspaper *La Stampa* reports a similar attack that happened in Milan:

The passers-by did not like the *capelloni*'s long hair .... A crowd made up of more than a thousand people gathered around 30 *capelloni*. ... Shouts and insults followed; without a doubt, the people wanted to cut the young men's hair, rip off their wigs and throw them in the fountain. The police intervened to save the *capelloni*. (*La Stampa* 1966, 2)

This article underlines the symbolic force of the crowd of passers-by, which is here unrealistically identified as more than a thousand people against only 30 *capelloni*. There is no mention of the reason why the *capelloni* were attacked, as if their long hair – or their wigs, which were often worn by young men to feign a long hairstyle, especially when the family was hostile to this trend – was enough to provoke the assault.

Newspaper articles do not report evidence of any actual cutting of hair, as illustrated by the above articles that talk only about attempts. However, letters written by young *capelloni* and their friends in teen magazines offer accounts of haircutting. In December 1966, a young man writes to *Big*'s editor Marcello:

Dear Marcello, the persecution continues. We thought that the 'cutting of hair' was a forgotten nightmare at this point, but the other day, a friend of mine – a former *capellone* – came to my house with his head shaven. Some unknown people locked him up in a room and shaved him. How is this possible? We went to the police station, but they laughed at us. Is there anyone we can speak to? (*Big* 1966c, 3)

The letter highlights how the wave of moral panic against the *capelloni* was not limited to a short period of time, as it lasted for more than one year. Indeed, several letters below demonstrate that accounts of similar attacks can still be found during 1967. Moreover, the person writing the letter claims that the police are not helping the *capelloni*, thus implicitly suggesting that the cutting of hair was not considered a problem for and by law enforcement. In another letter, reader Gianpaolo Mattin claims that the shearing of the young French beatnik Patrik Leprevest had happened inside the Milan police station, therefore accusing the police of having carried out the haircutting (Mattin 1966, 3). Although the accuracy of these letters is not certain, the fact that these assaults were reported signals that a general anxiety towards long-haired youths existed in Italian society. The meaning of these haircuts cannot be reduced to a strategy to bring back the hierarchy of power in the family, given that they were allegedly committed by either anonymous groups of people, or by the authorities. Attempts to eliminate long hair – and thus to eliminate the *capelloni* – seem to reflect a desire and a perceived entitlement to contain one of the most visible aspects of young people's subversive attitudes.



The impact of these attacks should not be underestimated, given that long hair was increasingly becoming a symbol of young people's generational identity. Fabrice Virgili points out that the cutting of hair is a peculiar form of punishment, in that it is not a painful act in itself; however it causes 'physical [damage, that is] loss of hair and moral damage [that is] humiliation' (Virgili 2002, 136-137). The cutting of hair can be seen to have provoked a sense of shame and humiliation in the *capelloni*. For example, in a 1966 letter to the editor of *Big*, a young man says that he was obliged to cut his hair because of compulsory military service: suddenly, he 'feels inferior' to his peers because he is not able to express his age identity through his hairstyle (*Big* 1966b, 3). He asks the editor for advice on where to buy a wig, which could temporarily solve his problem, and make him a *capellone* again. The significance of long hair as an element of identification for Italian youths is also present in the following letter, which appeared in *Big* in 1967:

I was happy, up to some days ago. But several people, who did not like my long mop, insulted me and chopped off my beautiful hair. You will not believe me, but this is what I felt: I lost my happiness. I suffer from an inexplicable complex and I cannot stand anyone's company, not even that of my girlfriend. I love her but I do not want her to see me until my hair has grown back. (*Big* 1967a, 10)

Following the shearing, not only has the young man writing lost an element of identification with, and belonging to, the community of the *capelloni*, of which his long hair allowed him to be part, but he also feels he has lost one of the features of his attractiveness for young women.

### **A 'hair war': shorn *capelloni* and shorn women**

The cuttings of the *capelloni*'s hair were thus violent acts that aimed to humiliate youths. In several newspaper accounts, the violence of these attacks was emphasized through the recurrent use of a war vocabulary. For example, in July the *Corriere della Sera* reports the attempted shaving of young French singer Antoine in Corsica:

Ten people hurt, a memorable brawl, three million liras of damages: this is the final toll of the 'Corsica landing' of the famous *capellone* singer Antoine, who also ran the risk of falling victim to the worst offence: a group of youths has indeed attempted to kidnap him in order to shave his head ... like a conscript. (1966d, 4)

In this article, the arrival of the young singer in Corsica is described with a vocabulary reminiscent of the 'Normandy landing' of American troops in June 1944. The article also defines the group of attackers as a 'commando unit' whose 'mission' was to kidnap the singer and shave his head. What is more, the article states that the attackers are 'youths': this clarification shows

that the anger towards the *capelloni* was not limited to the adults, and it was therefore not just caused by a generational conflict. Another article, which appeared in the *Corriere della Sera* in October 1966, recounts a clash between a group of paratroopers and several *capelloni* outside a beat club in Tarbes, France. This confrontation is said to have ended with the shaving of the *capelloni*'s hair. Here, the fight is called a '*hair war*', the paratroopers are called '*partisans of short haircuts*', and the fight is defined an '*act of mopping up*'. Lastly, the cutting of hair of the *capelloni* that followed the fight is said to have been carried out '*against the Geneva Convention*' (L. Bo. 1966, 5, my italics). Indeed, article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Convention, which aims to regulate humanitarian treatment in war, prohibits '*outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment*', including mutilation ('Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949').

The use of vocabulary usually associated with war crimes is, I would argue, reminiscent of a similar series of attacks that took place in post-liberation Italy and France, namely the shaving of collaborationist women. Immediately following the end of the Second World War, there is evidence of several attacks against those French and Italian women who were '*imagined and represented as the [German soldiers'] spies and lovers*' (Martini 2015, 5). According to eyewitness accounts, these women were attacked by crowds of people and punished through having their heads publicly shaved. *Corriere della Sera* features a direct connection between these shorn women and the cutting of the *capelloni*'s hair in an article which appeared in April 1966. This article discusses how the Russian press have suggested that their country's *capelloni* should be '*shaved like those women who in wartime had had relationships with the enemy*' (*Corriere della Sera* 1966c, 18).

Although there are substantial differences in the historical and social context between these series of attacks – first and foremost the fact that actions against collaborationist women were happening in a wartime context – there are also several significant similarities. Firstly, both series of attacks reflected an attempt to re-establish authority over subordinated identities, be they women or young men, accused of collaborating with a foreign force. Secondly, they were both aimed at a bodily feature, namely hair, which bears strong gender and sexual connotations. Thirdly, they were both committed by anonymous groups of people. Both such acts therefore reveal tensions that were widespread within the societies in which they were perpetrated. Indeed, both series of attacks happened in periods characterised by a crisis of traditional masculinities, and by a general redefinition of gender roles. Fabrice Virgili has noted that the liberation of France was seen as a moment of the return of virility for French men, after the defeat against Germany – and therefore the inability to defend the '*woman*' *par excellence*, the motherland –,

the humiliations caused by the German occupation, and the new social role obtained by French women during the war. While French men were on the frontline, women had become economically active and they had actively participated in the French Resistance, thus increasingly overcoming their stereotypical role as wives and mothers (Virgili 2002, 238-239). Virgili demonstrates that not all the women who were shorn were actually having relationships with the enemy, but some of them were just not sticking to roles conventionally considered as feminine: for example, some had practiced abortion or abandoned their children. As Corran Laurens also explains:

women's new-found independence and importance during the war ... contrasted sharply with the humiliation of French men. Given this crisis of male identity, the shearings could be said to represent both an attempted symbolic reversal of women's emergent power, and an exorcism of the image of threatened masculinity from public memory ... to restore a familiar hierarchy and to act as a warning to women to revert to their expected socio-cultural peacetime role. (Laurens 1995, 176-177)

The shaving of collaborationist women's heads has thus been seen as a symbolic punishment to re-establish male domination and control over women's bodies, and to dispel the image of threatened masculinity from collective memory.

Similarly, the 1960s were a moment of crisis for Italian masculinities: Sandro Bellassai claims that the late 1950s and early 1960s was the period of the 'decline of virilism' in Italian society. By 'virilism', Bellassai means the model of an authoritarian, hierarchical and violent masculinity that became hegemonic in the male collective imaginary in Italy during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, thanks to ideologies such as colonialism and fascism (2011, 98). The emergence of mass culture and the crisis of the rural patriarchal world in the postwar period inevitably changed the stereotypical construction of Italian men's gendered identity. Moreover, the collective questioning of Italian 'virilism' was due to a loss of male power over both young people and women, who were becoming increasingly emancipated from patriarchal values. Given the comparable situation of crisis in which these acts were perpetrated, literature on French and Italian shorn women provides a model for analysing the attacks on the *capelloni*, this time seen as a reaction to the 'decline of virilism' and as a form of exemplary punishment against Italian young people's gender and transnational identity.

### **Shorn *Capelloni* and Italian masculinities**

The cutting of the *capelloni*'s long hairstyles might be interpreted as a reaction to the ongoing changes in the standards of masculine appearance for Italian men. In a letter published in the teen magazine *Big*, a young man is said to be forced into a fight on the street because a crowd questioned his 'masculinity':

several days ago, a handsome young man, Giuseppe B., was crossing one of the main streets in the city, and trying to ignore the people laughing at his big and long hair. At a crossroads, a group of young men started to make fun of his appearance, questioning out loud his *masculinity*, with the support of a crowd nearby. Giuseppe approached the gang, and the discussion got more intense, up to the point that it became a fight. ... At this point poor Giuseppe only had two options: the Carabinieri or the police station. After some indecisiveness, ... he found a third option: that of the barber. He entered the boutique of a local Figaro and... All gone. All his protest was there, on the ground, in the shape of shorn curls. ... The *capellone* decided to go back to his bourgeois, village life with a short haircut. (*Big* 1967b, 8, my italics)

To appreciate the importance of 'a short haircut' for Italian young men, we need to understand that the wearing of long hair was seen as symptomatic of a 'non-definition of gender' (Castellani 2010, 60). Long hair had been a prerogative of female appearance since the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the adoption of long hairstyles for men was challenging the cultural norms of masculine gender and respectability, and it was invoking both a redefinition of male beauty standards, and criticisms of this new fashion. Indeed, in the story recounted above, Giuseppe's long hair is a pretext to accuse him of a 'lack of masculinity'. The only option for Giuseppe to reclaim his 'masculinity' is to cut his hair, therefore realigning with traditional standards of a masculine appearance in Italian society.

As the adoption of long hairstyles by men was disrupting that 'metaphysical unity' of sex, gender, and desire that Judith Butler identifies as the basis of the social construction of 'women' and 'men' (1999, 30), the *capelloni*'s hairstyle was often interpreted as a sign of effeminacy. Such gender destabilisation was seen in post-liberation France and Italy: Andrea Martini claims that collaborationist women were criticised for their 'masculine' attitude (Martini 2015, 55), namely their independence and sexual emancipation, two aspects stereotypically associated with men. Similarly, in the mid-1960s young men were often criticised for being 'effeminate', which was a way to define their non-alignment with stereotypically masculine features. For example, a *Corriere della Sera* article published in August 1966 describes how a young couple was fined for kissing on the Trinità dei Monti steps in Rome. The article, entitled 'Enigmatic *capelloni*: which one of them is the woman?' is accompanied by a big picture of the couple hugging: the

young man has long hair, while the young woman has short hair (*Corriere della Sera* 1966e, 12). The choice of the title underlines that the anxiety here is not about the shorter haircut of the woman, but rather in the young man's long hairstyle, perceived as feminine.

Bellassai notes that the 'decline of virilism' in Italian society was also induced by young people's pacifist ideals, which contrasted with the hegemonic conceptualisation of masculinity as aggressive and violent (Bellassai 2011, 98). The *capelloni* were endorsing pacifism: an article that appeared in *Corriere della Sera* in November 1966 underlines the difference between generations by looking at the *capelloni*'s 'battle cry', namely 'make love not war'. This article interprets the pacifism of young people as a sign of effeminacy: 'contrary to their fathers' virile ideals, the *capelloni* de-masculinise themselves, they become effeminate: and they seem to react to the *en brosse* haircut, which is the symbol of the cruellest militarism' (Todisco 1966, 3). In this article, the *capelloni* are presented as 'effeminate' because of their refusal of war and violence, which were commonly seen as naturalised 'masculine' acts. This is arguably the reason why articles dealing with attacks to the *capelloni* tend to use a military vocabulary.

Robyn R. Warhol points out how effeminacy is generally associated with weakness and (sexual) passivity, two behaviours that are stereotypically seen as feminine. The concept of 'effeminacy' is thus inherently misogynistic and homophobic, as it tends to naturalise the subordinate position of women and non-hegemonic masculinities (Warhol 2003, 9-10). Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson also note that 'the label of effeminacy ... ensures the continuation of power structures based on the maintenance of clearly demarcated male and female social roles' (2004, 247). To cut the hair of the *capelloni* can be seen as a symbolic punishment for the perceived 'effemination' of Italian men, and it shows an attempt to symbolically restore both the traditional division between male and female appearance and Italian 'virilism' – that is, the naturalised ideal of a powerful and violent masculinity.

The attacks against a hairstyle trend that was clearly borrowed from other countries can also be interpreted as an attempt to re-establish the prevalence of Italian values over foreign influences. The cutting of the *capelloni*'s hair arguably aimed to re-establish a sense of national identity after the period of the economic boom, when Italian society became increasingly influenced by the economic and cultural hegemony of countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. In particular, the emerging Italian youth culture was essentially shaped by foreign models, as young people's music, fashion and style trends were imported from abroad or influenced by foreign trends. To attack a foreign-inspired style element such as long hair can then also be seen as a strategy to symbolically make Italian youths 'Italian' again, by forcing them to follow the traditional Italian standards of male appearance.

The symbolic re-establishment of Italian 'virilism' should not just be seen as a demonstration of power, but also as a 'self-preservative action' and as a reaction against the increasing popularity and appeal of new standards of masculine appearance in Italian society. Laurens underlines that there is a strong sexual dimension connected to the cutting of collaborationist women's hair: given that women were accused of a sexual 'crime' – that is, having sex with the enemy – the attack was executed on a stereotypically seductive feature such as hair (1995, 156). Indeed, the sexual element is always emphasized in accounts of attacks on collaborationist women, as a way to underline their moral corruption (Martini 2015, 51). In the case of *capelloni*, long hair was also considered an attribute of seduction, in this case masculine: in the mid-1960s, standards of beauty for men were changing and long hair became a feature of attractiveness. For example, in 1967 the Rokes' singer Shel Shapiro, with his long hairstyle, was elected 'the most handsome man in the world' by the young readers of the magazine *Big* (1967c, 42). The *capelloni* were becoming a sexually attractive 'other' in Italian society, not only because their hairstyle was of foreign inspiration, but also because it differed greatly from how an Italian man was supposed to look in the 1960s. To cut their hair was therefore an attempt to dispel the threats to Italian 'virilism' caused by the emergence of this new standard of masculine appearance.

The cutting of hair can also indirectly be seen as a sign of the desire of Italian society to regain control over female bodies, at a time in which young women were increasingly socially and sexually emancipated (Bellassai 2011, 98). Newspaper articles often attributed young women's growing desire for social emancipation and sexual freedom to the *capelloni*'s negative influences. For example, the frequent news in magazines regarding the running away from home of young women was presented as their escaping with the *capelloni* (*Corriere della Sera* 1966f, 9). The element of personal choice of the young women is completely erased in these articles, where the constant identification of the potential kidnappers as '*i capelloni*' clearly posits them as guilty of influencing young women's emancipatory choice. The *capelloni*'s attractiveness was seen as a threat both to Italian men's traditional beauty standards and virility, and to the purity of Italian young women. By cutting the *capelloni*'s long hair, Italian men were re-establishing the superiority of their 'virile' sex appeal and they were preserving young women's sexual purity threatened by the *capellone* 'other'.

### **Shorn Capelloni on screen: *Il Mostro della Domenica* (1968)**

Whilst print media representations suggest that the shearing of the *capelloni* can be read as an attempt to re-establish traditional notions of Italian 'virilism' in a turbulent moment of social

change, it is significant that one of the few audiovisual representations of this phenomenon tries to ridicule the conventional view of the *capelloni* as being a threat to Italian society and gender norms. This appears in the collective film *Capriccio all'Italiana* (*Caprice Italian Style*, Mauro Bolognini et al., 1968), in the episode entitled *Il mostro della domenica* (*Sunday's Monster*, Steno, 1968). *Il mostro della domenica* displays a humorous representation of the shavings of the *capelloni* in popular culture, which testifies to the popularity of these figures in Italian society, and the occurrence of these attacks in the collective imaginary. The episode was filmed in 1967, when the wave of moral panic against the *capelloni* started to decline. It was one of the last films featuring Neapolitan actor Antonio De Curtis – also known as Totò – before his death in the same year. This film clearly conveys the sense of preoccupation about the *capelloni* in Italian society, and at the same time it mocks and reveals the fragility of the ideal of Italian virility and questions the alleged ‘otherness’ of the trend of long hair. The analysis of the representation of hair-cutting in this short film is thus useful to provide a final reflection on the legacy of the public outcry against the *capelloni*, and on the role of popular culture in contributing to social changes in Italian society.

The film starts with a bird’s eye view of several iconic monuments in Rome, such as the equestrian statue of Giuseppe Garibaldi and the bust of Giuseppe Rosi in the Janiculum hill and Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s Triton Fountain in Piazza Barberini, which all represent men with long hair. The camera then moves away from the long hair of these statues and focuses on groups of *capelloni* who meet or walk around these monuments. By emphasizing the long hair of key figures in Italian history, this first sequence historicises and italianises the *capelloni*. In this way, the alleged novelty and ‘otherness’ of this trend is diminished. Indeed, one of the justifications used by the *capelloni* to resist criticism was their similarity to significant icons of Italy: for example, an article in *La Stampa* reports that ‘the *capelloni* have declared at the police station: “we are inspired by Dante and Garibaldi”’ (1966, 2).

The film then presents the protagonist of the story, played by Totò, who hates the *capelloni* because he thinks they are immoral and dirty. One day, while the man (hereafter called Totò, for sake of convenience) is driving with a blonde woman to his house, his car breaks down. Two *capelloni* offer their help, and eventually they manage to get invited for lunch to Totò’s house by his companion. Not only do the *capelloni* ruin Totò’s plan to seduce the woman, but they also openly critique his lifestyle and, most importantly, his seduction techniques. For example, one *capellone* tells him that his classical music records do not appeal to women, because they prefer modern music. Totò is astonished by the fact that women prefer the *capelloni* to him, ‘who gets a haircut twice a week’, and gets angry with the long-haired man

who ‘wants to teach him how to attract women’. In other words, his rage against the *capelloni* comes from the realisation that these young men are more attractive than he is to the woman he is trying to seduce.

Totò is humiliated by this disastrous date, and he plans revenge: by using disguises, he kidnaps several *capelloni* all around Rome. The disguises reproduce a series of stereotypes commonly associated with long-haired young men: for example, Totò dresses up as an effeminate homosexual with blond hair, floral shirt and a sweet voice, and asks two *capelloni* whether they are foreigners, and if they want to go for a drive with him. This scene is filmed at the Foro Italico, a place that clearly evokes Italy’s Fascist past, and perhaps aims to underline the kidnapper’s fascist values and methods. Totò also disguises himself as a ‘beat’ female prostitute, offering a *capellone* advice on hair salons. Totò’s use of disguises sheds light on the instability of the man’s own masculinity: the fact that he effectively dresses up as a homosexual and a woman shows that his alleged ‘virility’ is performative, as he can easily appropriate different identities. Moreover, the use of settings all around the city of Rome for the kidnappings, including the Colosseum, the Spanish Steps in Piazza di Spagna and a peripheral area of the city, situates the presence of the *capelloni* in a widespread context, which is not limited to specific areas, and therefore tends to normalise their presence.

The news of a mysterious ‘monster’ kidnapping the *capelloni* hits the press, and the police start to investigate. Totò eventually gets arrested, and he is persuaded by the police to reveal where he keeps the *capelloni*. Upon their arrival at an abandoned warehouse, the police are surprised to find the young men alive and well, but all of them are shorn. When asked about his choice, Totò explains that he is not a murderer, but rather a ‘castigator of bad manners’: he compares himself to a crusade saving Italian society from the *capelloni*, and admits that he has shaved the young men. When the police chief (Ugo D’Alessio) tells the victims that they are now free, they reply that they are not leaving the refuge until their hair grows back, as they are ashamed of their new haircut. Indeed, most of them try to cover their shaved heads with objects such as towels and pots. When Totò is accompanied back to the police station, the police chief is visited by his son, who he has not seen for months – and he has become a *capellone*. So the chief changes his mind about punishing the *capelloni*’s attacker. Not only is Totò released so that he can cut off the police chief’s son’s hair, but at the end of the episode he becomes ‘secret agent K07 – with a licence to shave’, therefore presumably secretly shaving the *capelloni*’s hair on behalf of the police.

The representation of the cutting of the *capelloni*’s hair in *Il mostro della domenica* denounces the excessive persecution of young men with long hair through the use of comedy.



The preoccupation with the *capelloni* is represented from the point of view of the perpetrator, thus revealing the anxieties that modern masculinities were producing in Italian men. Indeed, the attacker's rage and frustration against young men comes from the realisation that his old-fashioned masculinity is no longer appealing to women. The grotesque character portrayed by Totò is clearly presented as a 'monster', in that he never regrets his acts. He accuses the *capelloni* of being effeminate, but at the same time feels confident in performing the role of a homosexual and a woman – which regrettably in the film are portrayed in their most clichéd stereotypes – when trying to kidnap long-haired young men. The reaction of the police to Totò's violent acts is particularly significant, as it aims to show how Italian society at the time did not completely reject the indignation against the *capelloni*. The 'monster' gets arrested when it is assumed that he killed his victims, and even when this assumption is proved wrong the police chief insists that he had no right to cut the *capelloni*'s hair. However, as soon as the police chief finds out that the problem of the *capelloni* has affected his own family, he does not hesitate to order the shearer to cut his own son's hair. When Totò's character is rewarded for his criminal act and starts working for the police, the audience is left wondering whether the 'monster' is just him, or also the society that allows him to humiliate and punish young people.

## Conclusion

Popular culture bears testimony to the wave of public indignation against the *capelloni* in the period 1965-7, when long-haired young men were perceived as a threat to Italian men's nationality, masculinity and sexuality in Italian society. The numerous accounts of attacks against the *capelloni*'s hairstyles demonstrate that the media contributed to highlighting and shaping attitudes around the moral panic that centred on the gender and generational difference of young men, often perceived as a challenge to the expected societal standards of virility in the mid-1960s. The violence towards the *capelloni*'s long hair can be interpreted as an exemplary punishment through which the adults symbolically regained their power over young people. Moreover, this article has shown that these attacks did not just concern issues of power between generations, but also originated from the realisation that the *capelloni* were proposing alternative and successful models of masculinity. The cutting of hair was a symbolic act to dispel threats to an ideal of 'virilism' that was already extremely unstable and old-fashioned.

Cohen identifies the final phase of a moral panic as that when 'the panic passes over and is forgotten ...; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce [social] changes' (2002, 1). Contemporary media coverage shows that the emergence of the *capelloni* in Italian society was a traumatic process, which challenged the traditional

conceptualisation of Italian masculinity, Italian virility and Italianness itself. This media exposure arguably contributed to slowly change these concepts after 1967, by allowing possibilities for gender bending and gender reconfiguration. Indeed, in her analysis of the American hippies' long hairstyles, Betty Luther Hillman underlines how 'the media and popular culture play a central role in promoting the ubiquity, if not acceptance, of these styles' (2015, 124). *Il mostro della domenica* demonstrates that popular culture and comedy were fundamental in initialising a normalisation and acceptance of the *capelloni*. The incorporation of this style in popular films as well as entertainment television programmes of the same period<sup>5</sup> domesticated the image of the Italian *capellone*, and made long hair for men more acceptable in the next decade, even if the ideal of Italian 'virilism' continued to influence the social construction of Italian masculinities. The relevance of the *capelloni* in Italian contemporary social history ultimately demonstrates how elements of style and bodily appearance may visually contribute to renegotiate identities, may fight – or reconfirm – gender stereotypes and may favour – or oppose – emancipation.

### Acknowledgements

The collection of primary material and the writing of this article were carried out during my PhD and Honorary Fellowship at the University of Hull.

### Notes on Contributor

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1. The articles, which are often accompanied by images of the *capelloni*, are accessible via the online archives of the two newspapers. *La Stampa* archive is open-access, while *Corriere della Sera*'s is available on subscription.

2. Quotations in Italian have been translated into English by the author.

3. Gianni De Martino and Marco Grispigni (1997) have written a complete history of the magazine. Their book features a reprint of all the seven issues of *Mondo Beat* (1966-67). The

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collection of letters and diary entries *Lettere dei capelloni italiani*, edited by Sandro Mayer (1968), gives interesting insights on Italian *capelloni*'s ideas about society, family and love. On the Italian beats, see also Guarnaccia 2005, De Martino 2008, Casilio 2006, Giachetti 2002a.

4. Sandro Mayer has collected several testimonies about *capelloni* from Italian intellectuals, singers, politicians and psychologists in *Lettere dei capelloni italiani* (1968, 47-76; 179-192).

5. For example, in a 1967 episode of the well-known Caroselli Miralanza series, the black chick Calimero, 'hero' of the TV advertisements of this brand of detergents, is visited by Teofilo, his *capellone* cousin (Carosello Miralanza, designed by Nino Pagot and Toni Pagot, Primo Canale, 1967). Teofilo is a comic character who is presented as a fool because of his big mouth.

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### **Italian Summary**

Prendendo in esame articoli di giornale, riviste giovanili e il film *Il Mostro della Domenica* (Steno 1968), l'articolo analizza la rappresentazione di una serie di atti di violenza compiuti dal 1965 al 1967 contro i capelloni, che comprendevano un tentato o effettivo taglio dei capelli di questi giovani. L'analisi confronta la rappresentazione mediatica di queste aggressioni con i tagli di capelli inflitti alle donne italiane e francesi incolpate di collaborazionismo nel secondo dopoguerra (Virgili 2002). La violenza contro i capelloni può essere interpretata come una forma di punizione simbolica per avere oltrepassato la divisione tra i generi con l'appropriazione di un attributo di seduzione tradizionalmente considerato femminile. Inoltre, tali atti possono essere letti sia come una strategia per riaffermare l'ideale di mascolinità italiana in un periodo di 'declino del virilismo' (Bellassai 2011), sia come un tentativo di contrastare l'emergere di nuovi standard di bellezza maschili nella società italiana.